Bike Racks Encourage Active Transportation in Pontiac, Michigan

by: Jennifer Lucarelli

SUMMARY

In Pontiac, Michigan, nearly 60,000 residents have access to 38 new bike racks across the city. The bike racks provide safe places for cyclists to park their bikes and encourage more people to ride bikes every day, whether for work, errands, or special events around town. From 2015 through 2016, Oakland University, the city of Pontiac, the Healthy Pontiac, We Can! (HPWC) coalition, and several city and county agencies worked together to promote the benefits of biking and offer cyclists the parking options many requested.

CHALLENGE

Physical activity can lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. In the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends that people get enough aerobic and muscle-building physical activity each week to improve their health. However, only 21% of American adults met those recommendations in 2015. Biking is an easy, affordable option for physical activity, but cyclists in Pontiac had few options for parking their bikes.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

These efforts are supported by CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) cooperative agreement. For ideas on how to encourage safe and affordable biking in your community, visit http://walkbike.info/pontiac/.

"Thanks to Healthy Pontiac We Can!, the expansion allowed us to integrate more bike stations into our streetscape plan, with places for more than 80 bicycles to be parked and secured."

- Glen Konopaskie

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SOLUTION

To help encourage more people to get moving, Oakland University led the effort to install 38 bike racks at 25 locations across Pontiac. Each rack holds two to seven bikes. Businesses nominated themselves or residents nominated businesses to receive bike racks for customer and employee use. Representatives from HPWC, teamGM Cares (General Motors), Gleaners Community Food Bank, Oakland County Economic Development and Community Affairs, and Oakland County Health Division all helped install the racks. The teamGM Cares volunteers alone donated 126 hours of labor for this project.

RESULTS

News of the new racks spread through a social media campaign featured on HPWC's Facebook page which had more than 720 followers, and through the websites of partner organizations. An ad also ran in a local newspaper. Businesses and organizations that requested the bike racks report that people are using them. The initiative is inspiring policy change to increase biking as a mode of transportation for the people of Pontiac. Coalition members also organized a "Take Back Our Sidewalks" event. Nearly two dozen people participated in the citywide day of cleaning up Pontiac's sidewalks to help make the city more walkable.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Oakland University continues to work toward increasing bike-friendly options throughout Pontiac. The university commissioned a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for the city, outlining steps to better cycling and walking conditions. It is one of many actions taken to provide alternative modes of transportation and address future traffic congestion by developing an efficient and coordinated transportation system. The university is also working to identify potential areas for bike lanes to further encourage residents to ride safely.

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